

THE
PHILOSOPHY

OF
Divine Revelation

NO
Argument of Imposture.



EDINBURGH

Printed in the Year MDCCXXXIV

See Hutchinson's Religion of Satan ^{Vol. 3.} page 86





T H E
P H I L O S O P H Y
O F
D i v i n e R e v e l a t i o n
N O

Argument of Imposture.

PRIVATE Judgment is the common Right of Mankind, their only Security against Falshood and Deception, and the best Means of discovering and finding out the Truth; And, indeed, the

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the Light is never so clear and strong, as when we strike it up within our Minds by impartial Reasoning ; then may we be said to be in the Light, and to walk in the Light.

IN Matters of a religious Concern, free Debate and Enquiry are absolutely necessary ; The natural Weight and Moment of the Things themselves, together with the Danger of being misled by Imposture on the one Hand, and by Enthusiasm on the other, are sufficient Arguments for a strict Examination. Our having once received any Revelation upon what appears to be the proper Evidence of a divine Authority, can, by no Means, excuse us from answering such Objections as may happen afterwards to be proposed : The Things objected to, might have escaped our first Notice and Observation ; and even tho' what is alledged be without Ground, yet, for the Conviction of others, it deserves to be considered and removed.

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FROM the late Improvements in Learning, several Objections have been made, to destroy the Credit of the *Sacred Books*, particularly, *That they teach Mankind a false System of the World, in Compliance with the common Prejudices and Mistakes of the Vulgar.* Copernicus may be allowed the first who gave Rise to any Scruple of this Kind; But his Hypothesis, being founded only upon probable Arguments, was not well able to stand in Opposition with the Sacred Philosophy, 'till Sir *Isaac Newton* appeared, and, by a just Method of Reasoning, established the same Hypothesis in Experiment and Observation: Then, indeed, it was evident, that the Scripture Accounts of the Laws and Operations of Nature were agreeable only unto the sensible Appearances of Things; and, consequently, were not to be defended by any Topicks which could prove them to be just and true in themselves.

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A late ingenious Author affirms, that *the Hebrew Writings of the Old Testament have never been, and are not now truly translated, or perfectly understood by those who pretend to be learned; and, that rightly understood and translated, they comprise in them a just and compleat System of Natural Philosophy.* The Principles he lays down in order to prove the Truth of these Propositions, were they admitted, would demonstrate the true Reading and Signification of the Original Language to be irrecoverably lost. The *Greek*, and other ancient Versions, he alledges, were made some Time after the genuine Sense of a great many Words and Phrases had been entirely forgotten: And the Vowel Points are, in his Opinion, a *Jewish* Invention, fitted up, on Purpose, not to preserve the true Reading, as is generally thought; but to establish and support some corrupt and false Doctrines, with which that Nation was deeply prepossessed. By such an Account of Things, there is no
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certain Tradition for the true Sound or Meaning of the Language; and, consequently, the Books themselves ought to be laid aside, as obscure and dubious Oracles, from which we who live at this Distance of Time, can, with no Safety, conclude any Thing relating either to Faith or Manners. These, and the like Consequences, do naturally follow, upon our Author's Concessions; so that, his new Scheme, I am afraid, will be attended with much greater Difficulties than the Method which is generally received; and which can be justified, upon very sufficient Grounds, as being the only Way of reading and understanding these Writings that has been transmitted down to us by Tradition; which we may very well believe to be pure and genuine, from the Care the *Jewish* Nation must have taken in preserving their Religion, and the Language in which it was revealed, since they were of the Opinion, that both were equally of a Divine Origin. That this Conjecture, so probable in itself, is true in Fact,
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can't be doubted, being confirmed by the concurrent Testimonies of Historians of good Credit, and by sufficient Documents yet extant ; such as, the *Masorethick Writings*, Works of inimitable Labour; and composed with great Art, to preserve the *Hebrew* Text from the smallest Corruption : So strong was their Inclination to have these Books conveyed to Posterity; and, no less, certainly, was their Care and Study, to transmit, along with them, the true Reading and Meaning ; since, otherwise, their Endeavours and Labours should have been in vain. These Reasons may serve to shew the Absurdity of any Attempt to introduce a new Method of reading and understanding the *Hebrew* Scriptures, different from that which is presently allowed, and which stands upon a credible Tradition. Whatever Doctrines therefore they teach us, according to the present reading, these we must receive and defend against the Cavils and Exceptions of Unbelievers ; and no Argument can be admitted;

mitted, that is inconsistent with the traditional Sense.

THE Answer commonly given to the Objection, by those who take the original Language in its usual Signification, is, that the Things objected to, being *incidental* only, are spoken *ad captum humanum*, and accommodated unto the Understandings of those to whom they were delivered. A Consideration, which, if duly weighed, might, perhaps, satisfy any unprejudiced Mind. But, however it be, a great many People, we know, continue to hesitate upon this very Point.

THE Force of the Objection, as I humbly conceive, consists in this, *That the sacred Scriptures contain in them such Accounts of the Laws and Operations of Nature, as are evidently demonstrated to be false in themselves; and therefore inconsistent with the Knowledge and Sincerity of*

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the Supreme Being, who must be allowed to have a perfect Understanding of his own Works, and Goodness enough not to deceive his Creatures with delusive and unjust Representations of them; especially, when that a Discovery of Things, as they are in themselves, would, in this Case, been of great Use and Importance unto Mankind, and given them better Notions of the Divine Excellencies and Perfections, than, possibly, they can have by any other Means.

THE Difficulty, placed in this Light, is far from being frivolous and trifling, and has one Advantage, whereof no other can boast, *viz.* As it accuses *Divine Revelation* with erroneous and false Doctrines, that are acknowledged to be so. To account, *a priori*, for the divine Conduct, in teaching such Things, will be exceeding difficult; and, perhaps, this may be one Reason why the Solutions that have been propos'd, don't carry sufficient Conviction along with 'em. Was there

there *any similar Instance*, or *any natural Constitution*, of such an Affinity and Relation unto the Case in Hand, as, that the divine Conduct, in both, might justly be compar'd together, and shewn *to be one and the same*; then it would appear to be very possible, that *the Supreme Being, who is the Author of the one, may also be the Author of the other*. That there is an Analogy of this Kind, is what I am to prove: And, in order to set the Argument in the clearest Light I can, I shall distinguish it into so many single Propositions.

I. THE *Author* of our Nature has fram'd us with Organs of Sense, by which he *conveys* into our Minds the Knowledge of external Objects. In this Manner only, we come to understand the various Properties and Relations of Bodies; and whatever Ideas of these are deriv'd by Impressions from the Things themselves, they are *necessary* and *unavoidable*, even as the Effects of *natural Causes*;

Causes : So that we must perceive them as we do, without being able to destroy or alter them, while the external Action, whereby they are excited, continues to be the same in all Respects : Our Perceptions of Things without us, therefore, do, all of 'em, in the first Instance, flow *directly* from Nature.

II. THE *Perceptions of Sense*, tho' they be communicated from without, and the Mind passive in receiving them, yet they are *not*, all of 'em, *just Representations* of their Objects ; as will appear from particular Instances. The Ideas of the *secondary* Qualities of Bodies, are only certain Modifications of Thought, and have nothing existing in Nature conform unto them : What is sweet, warm, or blue in our Apprehension, is, in the Bodies themselves, the Bulk, Figure and Motion of their insensible Parts ; and, as these are not discernible, so neither their Fitness to produce in us Sensations, unto which they bear no Resemblance.

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THE Case is not the same, in respect of the *primary* Properties of Body, such as Extension, Solidity, Figure, Motion and Rest; *in general*, these and the like appear unto the Senses as they really exist; and so inseparable are they from any material Substance, that, without them, it can't be conceiv'd or imagined: Yet Experience shews how far our Perceptions of their several Modes and Degrees vary from the Truth and Being of Things.

TO begin with *Extension*, which seems to be first in Order, and, when applied unto corporeal Substances, is no other than their Bulk and Magnitude, or their Length, Breadth and Depth, taken together. These Dimensions are perceptible either to our Sight or our Touch; and when Objects are in such a happy Situation, as they may be both seen and felt, then are we in the least Danger of being deceiv'd, and can make a tolerable Estimate, which, yet, is not to be depended on

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on as perfectly exact: And if we are apt to form erroneous Judgments upon the Testimonies of both these Senses, concurring together, we may easily apprehend how much our Mistakes will be increas'd, when left unto the Assistance of any one of 'em, even in the most advantageous Position. But, should the Objects be removed from us, in that Case, their Magnitudes would diminish in Proportion, and our Errors, about them, turn still the more considerable: We can, indeed, make Allowances in our Minds, according as we know their Distances to be greater or smaller: But, in what Manner to determine their Distances, when we understand not their true Bulk, is not easy to conceive: And, if their Distances are not given, it will be impracticable to measure their true Magnitudes with the naked Eye; and, consequently, where we are ignorant of both, and left to the bare Informations of Sense, we must necessarily fall into many gross Mistakes about them: Thus, for Instance, the heavenly Bodies do,
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all of 'em, appear to be at equal Diſtances from us, and none of 'em ſo remote as they really are; and therefore, we take them to be vaſtly leſs in themſelves, or much bigger, in reſpect of one another, than they really exiſt.

THE ſecond Property of Matter is *Solidity*, which, being always the ſame, and admitting of no different Degrees; we can never miſtake it in any Caſe; yet Bodies there are, ſo very ſubtile and fluid, that, making no ſenſible Reſiſtance to our Touch, we conceive them to be penetrable Subſtances; for this Reaſon, Water and Air were not ſolid, even in the Opinion of the ancient Philoſophers, till, by certain Experiments, the contrary was evidently proven.

THE third Property of corporeal Subſtances is *Figure*, and is no other than the particular Surface or Surfaces under which any Body does exiſt, whereof we can have no
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Idea, unless the Object be perceptible, and may be view'd on all Sides, which is not to be done, where the Magnitude is either too big, or too minute, or the Thing itself remov'd at too great a Distance: In all these Cases, the Shape varies, loses its true Appearance, and degenerates into a false One: For Instance, the Globes of the Sun and Moon are apparently plain like the Sections of a Cylinder, and have no sensible Curvature, towards our Eye: The Earth also, on Account of its vast Bulk, instead of appearing round and spherical, it seems rather to be long and broad; we comprehend, in one View, but a small Portion of its real Magnitude; and the small Portion of a large Sphere, we know, produces the Image of a plain Surface; besides, when we look around us, we see Mountains and Valleys; and how a globular Surface can be propagated, through such Inequalities, will not be easily understood by most People.

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LASTLY, *Motion* and *Rest*, whereof our Senses can only inform us, are often, thro' a false Appearance, mistaken, the one for the other. Bodies are said to move when they change Place, in respect of other Bodies with which they are compar'd : And this Change may be produced with such a Degree of Velocity, or of Slowness, as not to be perceiv'd. In the one Case, the Body in Motion will be invisible and quite out of Sight ; and, in the other, it will seem to stand still ; and, that it has been moving at all, can only be discerned by comparing its Situation in two distant Points of Time, which yet, in many Instances, cannot be done ; as, should two or three Bodies be put into Motion, and continue to preserve their Places among themselves, they would, all of them, appear to be at Rest, provided there were no other Bodies, to which they might be referred. Farther, should a Spectator be plac'd in such a Station, as is actually moving, but feels himself partaking of no Motion, he would

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imagine the Body, where his Station is, to be fix'd, and at perfect Rest, while all other Bodies about him would appear to be moving, and that in a contrary Direction : In this Manner, being insensible of the Earth's Motion from West to East, we apprehend the Sun and all the Planets to be moving from East to West.

THESE and the like Perceptions of the corporeal World are produced and excited in us, by the Operation of Causes foreign to the Mind ; and, consequently, must be necessary and unavoidable, in respect of our own Frame, the Nature of the Things themselves, and their Position unto our Senses ; unavoidable, I say, during the Continuance of the external Action.

III. Tho' these Ideas and Perceptions be necessary in the first Instance, and however falsely they represent the Being and Existence of Things, yet Mankind can neither *discover*
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their Fallacies, nor be *convinced* by those who have discovered them; so that they must continue to apprehend Things as they do; without ever being *able* to see their Errors and Mistakes. A few Men there are, indeed, of a *Philosophick Genius*, who have studied Nature, and, by Experiment and Demonstration, exploded the Conceits of the Vulgar, and given true Accounts of the several Properties, Laws and Operations of Bodies: But, is it possible that ever these Things can be made plain and evident unto common Understandings; the Knowledge and Certainty thereof depending on Principles too remote, and a Course of Reasoning too intricate to their Conception: So that every Attempt to instruct them, in such Matters, must prove vain and unsuccessful. Most Men, indeed, without being taught, may know the first Rudiments of all Science, *viz.* a few self-evident Propositions, and some others deducible from them, by an immediate and obvious Consequence, which they can,
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by some Assistance, apply to the learning the several Trades and Employments in Life ; but are not capable, thro' Want of Time and Opportunities, of carrying their Views much farther : And it is very evident, that, taking Mankind as we find them, they don't admit of Conviction in any Case which happens to be contrary unto the express Testimony of their Senses.

IV. The Ideas of Sensation, therefore, as they flow directly from Nature, are, in many Instances, false and unjust Representations of their Objects; nor can they be alter'd and reform'd to the Conviction of the Bulk of Mankind, who must conceive of Things as they do, where they have no express Testimony of their Senses, to make them conceive otherwise : So that they, *natura duce*, are unavoidably involv'd in many Mistakes about material and sensible Objects, which they can't correct by any Assistance whatever. Here then is a *Case*, where, by a *fixed Law*
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and Constitution, and, consequently, by the *Will of the Supreme Being*, we apprehend the Qualities and Operations of Bodies differently from their real Existence; which is a Fact so plain and evident, that it can't well be disputed: And the Concern which the first Cause has in it, is so great, that he may be said to be as much the *Author thereof*, as he is the *Author of Nature*. Hence we conclude, he may also be the Author of a *Revelation*, wherein Things of the same Kind are plac'd in a like Light; corporeal Objects, I mean, represented as they appear unto the Senses, even when this Appearance is not agreeable unto their real Existence. In both these Cases, the *divine Conduct* is so *consistent* and *analogous* with itself, that the Fitness of the one must shew the Fitness of the other; and any Objection that can be made against either of 'em, must equally fall upon both, and be liable unto a just Exception of proving too much, *viz.* An Error in the very Frame and Constitution of Things,
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and a Blunder in the Works of the Alwise God ; an Absurdity allow'd by none but downright Atheists, with whom I don't mean presently to argue. If, then, the Question should be put, How Writings of a divine Authority can be supposed to contain so many false Representations of Things ? The Answer will be, that these Representations, such as they are, happen to be no other than what were deriv'd into our Minds, in a natural Way, by Means of our Senses. Should it be urged, that tho' the Ideas convey'd into our Minds be wrong and unavoidable, in the first Instance, yet it may be very possible to correct and amend them by Reason, or by a more perfect Observation. To this, it will be enough, to say, that the Fallacies of Sense are of two Kinds, either they are such as are obvious, and evident unto the Bulk of Mankind, or such as are not so, and cannot be understood by them, even after all the Attention and Application they themselves are Masters of, and the most particular Instruction

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on from others, who, by artificial Helps, and a tedious Course of Study, have arrived to the Knowledge of them. These, and these only, we affirm, Nature teaches, because, to most People, she affords *no better Information*; and these are the very Things charg'd on the sacred Books as *certain Marks of Imposture*.

MANKIND feel no Motion in the Earth, nor can they perceive it to change its Place, in respect of any Point which they take to be immoveable; therefore they imagine, that it is in perfect Rest, and must be the central Body of the whole System, as seeming to be of the greatest Magnitude, and placed at equal Distances from the Heavens, on all Hands, and about which the Sun, Moon and Stars have an apparent Motion. This is the true State of the World, according unto the common Sense and Judgment of the Vulgar and Illiterate: And, indeed, it is not possible they can form any other Notion of it, which,

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to them, will have the same Degree of Evidence and Certainty.

IN the same Manner, the sacred Writings represent the Earth, as hanging upon nothing establish'd and fix'd ; that it abideth, and removeth not from its Place ; the Heavens stretch'd above as a Curtain, and the Sun, Moon and Stars running their Courses, and making a Circuit from the one End thereof unto the other, *Job* xxvi. 7. *Psalms* civ. 2, 5. *Psalms* cxix. 90. *Psalms* xix. 1, -- 3.

SUCH an Account of the System of the World agrees accurately with every sensible Appearance : Were it neither true in itself, nor true in Appearance, there should be no Room for the smallest Apology ; but since this is not the Case, it must still be a good Defence, to say, that our Senses inform us in the *same Manner* : And, however false and unjust this Information may be, it was all that Mankind had, or could have, *antecedently*

cedently to *Revelation*: And, if the Supreme Being design'd they should have had other and better, he would have given them other and more perfect Senses; or, at least, afforded them Means of correcting these they have. Neither of which he hath done; and, consequently, it may be construed to be his Will, that they should perceive Things as they do: And since it was the divine Will, antecedently to *Revelation*, that Mankind should perceive Things as their Senses might enable them, it must be allow'd, that Writings may be from God, which teach the same Things, in a like Manner: The Ideas therefore of corporeal Objects, convey'd to us by *Revelation*, being the Continuation of those Ideas which were deriv'd to us by that *Method of Instruction*, which was originally establish'd in Nature; the Author of *the one* may, very consistently with himself, be also the Author of *the other*.

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IT can't be objected, that, by this Way of reasoning, a *Divine Revelation* may contain in it any Fallhoods whatever, since the Argument all along relates unto material and sensible Objects; and in relation to these it only concludes.

SHOULD it be alledged, that our Senses, in many Cases, have deceiv'd us, and their Deceptions have been discover'd, which is a natural Hint to admonish us not to trust unto them at all: 'Tis true, indeed, that such Hints of their Fallacies ought to make us cautious, and careful to examine Matters, but they can never justify a perfect Scepticism: The safest Rule which Mankind can observe, is, to take the Evidence of Sense, where *Reason*, or a contrary Testimony of *Sense*, doth not destroy it to *their Conviction*.

FARTHER, if it was alledged, that the Method of Instruction, by the Senses, is so imperfect and deceptive, that it will be difficult

ficult to conceive, how a *Divine Revelation* can comply with it : It will be a sufficient Answer, to say, that whatever Reasons made such a Method of teaching fit to be established in *Nature*, would, if known, justify the Continuance thereof by a *Revelation* : What these Reasons were, we don't pretend to determine : However, there are some Considerations, which, in our Way of conceiving, may serve to give a probable Account of the divine Conduct in this Matter.

I have endeavour'd to prove, that the Author of our Nature derives into our Minds the same Ideas of corporeal Objects, in a natural Way, that he conveys to us by *Revelation* ; but a great many People, perhaps, may be unwilling to admit the Fact, from some Apprehensions they have, that the Thing is not very agreeable unto the Dignity and Character of the Supreme Being. In order, then, to remove such a Prejudice, it will be necessary to give a probable Representation

sentation of the divine Management : And because the foregoing Argument relates, in a special Manner, to the Idea we have of the System of the World, I shall, therefore, on this Head, pursue my Enquiry in the same View : And, since those great Bodies, which belong unto the System of the World, are generally remov'd at vast Distances from us, therefore, any Knowledge that possibly we can have of them, must be deriv'd to us by our Sense of Seeing : So that, to examine the Fitness of the divine Conduct, in conveying unto our Minds such an Idea of the System of the World, is the same Thing, as to enquire into the Fitness of that particular Degree of Vision which the Author of our Nature has given us.

I. EVERY Man's own Experience must convince him of the Excellence and Usefulness of this Sense, imperfect as it is : He is thereby sufficiently directed in all the voluntary Motions of the several Members of his
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Body, and in their proper Applications unto external Objects : He is also guided in discovering and acquiring those Things that immediately relate to the Nourishment and Support of his animal Life ; and in avoiding other Things that may be noxious and hurtful ; And, so far as his Preservation is concern'd, he could receive no greater Advantage from a Vision more perfect in its Kind : But, besides, his Mind is entertain'd with the most agreeable and delightful Perceptions of Proportion, Beauty, Order and Harmony, and is furnish'd with a sufficient Stock of Ideas, about which to perform the various Operations of Comparing, Reasoning, and the rest ; I say, a sufficient Stock of Ideas, because 'tis evident, a much greater would rather perplex than improve his Understanding : And indeed there is a surprising Conformity, of the Number of our Ideas and Perceptions, to the Strength of our Faculties that are given us to dispose and range them into Order, and to retain them for future Use : And this Conformity,

mity, more than any Thing else, discovers the Wisdom of the Author of our Nature, in framing and enduing us with such a Number of Senses, and these in such Degrees: If therefore we attend either unto the Necessities of our animal Life, or unto the Strength of the Faculties of our Minds, we must discern the Fitness of our present Vision, in the *Relation* and *Proportion* it bears unto both these. We are, next, to examine whether such Purposes might be obtain'd, with equal Advantage, from a much higher Degree of the same Sense.

II. Tho' we can't, in our present Situation, well understand how we should feel ourselves, in the Case of a much higher Degree of Sense and Vision, yet there is Ground for such probable Conjectures as ought not to be neglected. We know, that presently all the Senses, Members and Parts of our Bodies, are adapted and appropportion'd to each other, and, that any considerable Variation of any
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one of them, destroys the Beauty of the whole, and draws along with it some real Loss or Inconvenience. A different Degree of Vision, therefore, might require a different Structure to that Sense; which, again, would require a different Size, Figure and Make to all others, in order to obtain and establish a proper Harmony among them: And when we should be invested with these new Bodies, they might, perhaps, not agree and correspond to such external Bodies as surround us, and which are so very suitable unto our present Frame and Constitution: And consequently, these behoved to be adjusted and modelled anew. In such a Change, we don't know whether we should be better or worse, happier or more miserable. Farther, a higher Degree of Sense, as I have already hinted, would probably overstock our Ideas and prove an Incumbrance, rather than a Help to our Understandings, and destroy that just Conformity that the Number of our Perceptions has to the Number and Strength of the
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the Powers and Faculties of our Minds. Besides, was this higher Degree of Vision adapted to the viewing of very distant Objects, such as the heavenly Bodies, it might be the less accommodated to those Objects that are present; or, at least, might divert our Attention too much, and make us negligent of such Things as our Frame and Condition have made the necessary Objects of our constant Care and Concern. The same Consequences would, probably, attend such an acute Vision, as might enable us to penetrate into the inmost Constitution of Bodies, and to perceive the Bulk, Texture and Motions of their insensible Parts: And, if the Ideas that would arise, should be supposed to come in Place of those Perceptions which we commonly call Tastes, Smells, Sounds, &c. in that Case, we should lose our most agreeable Sensations, and, with them, all the Pleasures of our animal Life. Now, these Considerations and Conjectures put together, appear to give a Probability, that any Degree

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of Vision, much different from that which we presently enjoy, would not sufficiently serve all the necessary Uses and Purposes mentioned under the first Article. We are next to examine what Account may be given, from these Observations, of the divine Management, in framing us with such a Degree of Sense and Vision, as conveys into our Minds wrong Ideas and Perceptions of the Corporal World.

III. Since our present Vision serves all the necessary Uses and Purposes in common Life; and besides, furnishes our Minds with a great many agreeable Perceptions, and with a Stock of Ideas for the Improvement of our Understandings: And since a much higher Degree of Vision would not serve these Uses and Purposes, with equal Advantage; the Fitness and Wisdom of the divine Conduct in giving us such a particular Degree of this Sense, will therefore be *very apparent*: For allowing, that it conveys into our Minds

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wrong Ideas and Representations of Things, and particularly, gives a false Idea of the System of the World; yet, if the Disadvantages of such Perceptions, are over-ballanc'd by many real Advantages, and if these Advantages cou'd not be obtain'd, by such a Degree of Sense and Vision as might enable us to perceive Things as they exist; or, which is the same Thing, if the Disadvantages were unavoidable, upon the Supposition, that the Advantages were to be reach'd; then, I say, it will appear reasonable and fit, for the sake of these Advantages, to suffer such Disadvantages to happen: It would, indeed, be unworthy of the Supreme Being to convey into our Minds, any wrong Representations of Things whatever, merely for the sake of these Representations themselves; but to derive such Ideas and Apprehensions for the sake of some Advantages of greater Importance unto us, is agreeable enough to all the Notions we can form of Wisdom and Goodness: If therefore the Disadvantages

advantages of those Perceptions may admit of a Compensation, and may possibly be ballanced by something *more beneficial* unto Mankind; then we shall have a probable Account of the divine Conduct in this Matter. Now, the Disadvantage that is suppos'd to attend our present Vision, is the false Idea of the System of the World, and the imperfect Notion of the great Creator, that some People imagine must arise in our Minds from such a wrong Perception of his Works. If indeed, the Knowledge of the true System, was absolutely necessary to discover the Existence and Perfections of the first Cause; or if the Idea we have of the apparent System, necessarily produc'd in us very absurd and unworthy Apprehensions concerning the Deity; in both these Suppositions, the Loss that Mankind should sustain would be irreparable, and there should be no probable Account to be given of the divine Conduct in allowing either the one or the other to happen. But neither of 'em
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is the true Case; the apparent System itself affords an Argument, for the Being and Attributes of God; and besides, there are other Things that appear unto our Senses as they really are, and which are sufficient Documents and Proofs for the same Purpose. Our own Make and Frame, the various Dispositions and Instincts of brute Animals, and the Structure of Plants and Vegetables, loudly proclaim their Author, and carry in them the sensible Impressions of the invisible Things of their Creator, even his eternal Power and Godhead. We may therefore conclude, that there can be no great Disadvantages arising from the wrong Ideas we have of the System of the World; and if there be any, they must be such as may be compensated and ballanced by Advantages more beneficial and necessary unto Mankind,

THESE, and the like Considerations, may serve to give a probable Account of the divine Management in deriving into our
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Minds, in a natural Way, wrong and unjust Perceptions of the Corporeal World. I shall put an End to this Enquiry, by making some short Observations, in order to shew the Fitness of the divine Conduct in continuing the same Ideas by a Revelation.

I. The sensible Appearances of Things are *so strong*, and *universal*, and the vulgar Persuasions, built upon them, *so deeply rooted*, that did a Revelation contradict them, it could not gain Belief or *Credit* in the World; the Proposers of such strange Doctrines would be looked on as Madmen or Fools, who having forsaken the sure Evidence and Testimony of their Senses, had given themselves up to the Conduct of a disorder'd Fancy and Imagination. 'Tis easy to impose on the Credulity of most People, because they are unapt to examine; but to convince them of any Thing where they see and feel the contrary, is the most difficult Task in the World, and what commonly fails of Success: A Revelation
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tion therefore, however well supported by its own Excellence, and the miraculous Countenance of Heaven, could never prevail on the Assent of the Bulk of Mankind, were it directly inconsistent with their Sense and Observation; such Inconsistencies therefore being strong Prejudices against the Belief of a divine Authority, it would be very unfit and improper to put them into a divine Revelation, were they not absolutely necessary to carry on the main Design of the Book.

II. Suppose such Things had been put into the sacred Books, it is evident they could not serve any Purpose in *Religion*, which, in a *sufficient Measure*, may not be reach'd by the other Way of proposing the same Things: The Knowledge of the Frame, Fabric and Mechanism of the Universe, is useful, as it inspires into our Minds just and worthy Apprehensions of the Deity; and to this Purpose 'tis only necessary we should understand the various Influences of Things
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in promoting the Welfare of Mankind. Now of these we have sufficient Information from common Sense and Experience, without understanding the true Structure and State of Things, or the several Laws and Ordinances which they observe: Perhaps it may be enquired, since this is the Case, what Advantage then do we receive from Revelation in these Matters? I answer, That tho' in some Sense we necessarily perceive the wise Uses and Purposes of Things, yet we are very unapt to reflect upon them, so as to discern the Goodness and Design of their Author: The sacred Books therefore are of no small Use, as they furnish us with a just Sett of Reflections of this Sort.

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